

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
2/19/2013

Senator Harp and Representative Walker:

My name is Sten Spinella and I am a senior at Valley Regional High School in Deep River, Connecticut. I am testifying on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. I would like to thank the Appropriations Committee for hearing this testimony.

One may ask me why I would testify for a women's legislative commission. Easy. My sister and my mother and the other women in my life, all of whom I admire, all have to deal with added social, economic, and health burdens simply because they were born as females. Fairness is elementary, and if you have a sibling you discover that early. When something is unfair you have to yell and complain and be a nuisance and, at times, deliver written testimony to bring attention to the problem. The PCSW would be significantly weakened if Governor Malloy's suggestion that it be merged with Asian-American, Latino, children, and African-American commissions were to come to fruition.

While I understand this proposed move is intended to save money, the commission uses only 430,000 dollars a year in their advocacy work for women. There are 1.4 million women over the age of 18 in Connecticut. This means the commission spends less than 60 cents per woman. Even when my sister refuses to give me a piece of her gum, she is worth more than 60 cents. The gum probably is too. Even when my mom won't let me stay out past 11:30, she's worth much more than 60 cents. Merging these groups together would save only a meager amount of money. Which makes me question the motives of the proposal.

My sister is a junior in high school. She would like to stay close to home for her college education. As a female on a Connecticut college campus there is a one in four chance that you will be sexually assaulted. The PCSW works tirelessly with public Connecticut colleges on this issue. If the PCSW were to be merged with the aforementioned commissions they would have to cut out certain programs to stay afloat. Would one of those programs be the work they do with colleges? I won't have my sister become a statistic in order to save a tiny bit of money. We have to ask ourselves if it's worth it.

Women make only 76 cents on the male's dollar. That's unfair. The work the PCSW does with this issue could be completely eliminated if this merger were to take place. There is absolutely no reason my sister should be making less money than a man solely because she is a woman.

Merging these commissions for the sake of a budget would not only be ineffective, but it would also be scary. Such an act would be complying with a naked power grab by the Governor, essentially creating toothless watchdogs. Not only would this be disastrous to my sister's future, but it would be for women of all ages, and for all the citizens represented by the other commissions and advocacy groups that are senselessly at stake. The populous needs these commissions to keep the government honest and to help citizens who are either minorities or are treated as such. The legislature needs their research and information. Merging these commissions would be a dangerous step in the wrong direction on both counts. For the sake of my sister, keep these groups autonomous. It's only fair.